

## Strategic Goal 2

*Veterans will be fully reintegrated into their communities with minimum disruption to their lives through health care, readjustment counseling, employment services, vocational rehabilitation, education assistance, and home loan guarantees.*

The following table identifies estimates of the total resources devoted to this strategic goal and its associated objectives.

		<b>FY 2003 Obligations (\$ in Millions)</b>	<b>% of Total VA Resources</b>
<b>Strategic Goal 2</b> <b>Ensure a smooth transition for veterans from active military service to civilian life.</b>		<b>\$3,704</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Performance Measures</b>		
2.1 Ease the reentry of new veterans into civilian life by increasing awareness of, access to, and use of VA health care, benefits, and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of claimants who are Benefits Delivery at Discharge participants.</li> <li>• Percent of VA medical centers that provide electronic access to health information provided by DoD on separated service persons.</li> </ul>	\$742	1.1%
2.2 Provide timely and accurate decisions on education claims and continue payments at appropriate levels to enhance veterans' and servicemembers' ability to achieve educational and career goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average days to complete original education claims.</li> <li>• Average days to complete supplemental education claims.</li> </ul>	\$1,966	3.0%
2.3 Improve the ability of veterans to purchase and retain a home by meeting or exceeding lending industry standards for quality, timeliness, and foreclosure avoidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreclosure avoidance through servicing (FATS) ratio.</li> </ul>	\$996	1.5%

## Objective 2.1

*Ease the reentry of new veterans into civilian life by increasing awareness of, access to, and use of VA health care, benefits, and services.*

### Performance Goal

*Increase the percent of claimants who are Benefits Delivery at Discharge participants.*

Twenty-two percent of claimants were Benefits Delivery at Discharge participants in 2003. The measure is new and still under development. A study is being conducted to evaluate

the effectiveness of the program. The evaluation results will assist in determining future goals and how to increase the participation of all discharged servicemembers from all

branches of service. Although we will continue to monitor our progress with this measure, it will no longer be reported as a key measure.

### Performance Goal

*Increase to 50 percent the VA medical centers that provide electronic access to health information provided by DoD on separated service persons.*

In 2003, we surpassed our goal by achieving 100 percent of VA medical centers that provide electronic access to health information provided by DoD on separated service persons. The Federal Health Information Exchange/Government Computerized Patient Record is fully installed and functioning at all sites. The program offices will continue working with DoD to expand from the initial functionality of this electronic access process in order to further facilitate the transition of veterans from DoD to VA. Veterans will be fully integrat-

ed into their communities through transitional health care and readjustment counseling services.

VHA measures success through the coordination of electronic information on separated service persons with DoD. Full access to this information will enable VA to provide a seamless transition for recently separated service persons enrolling in the VA health care system. The success of achieving this performance goal depended on VA and DoD cooperation, not only in implement-

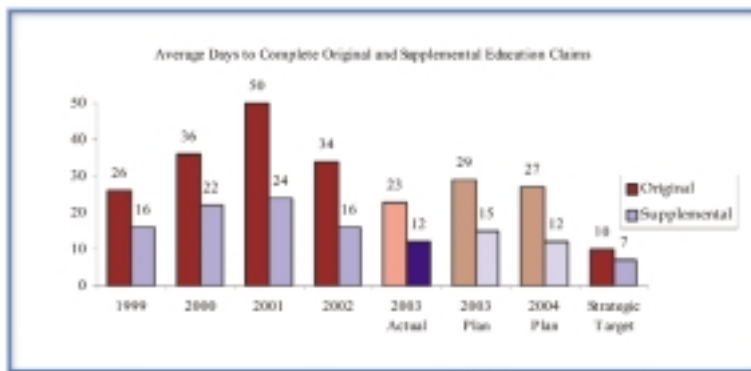
ing this initiative but also in the ability of the two agencies to develop a way for the systems to communicate electronically. VA is working with DoD officials to support claims development and the physical examination process prior to separation. In conjunction with DoD, VA develops and implements clinical practice guidelines with a long-range view toward ensuring continuity of care and a seamless transition for a patient moving from one system to the other.

## Objective 2.2

*Provide timely and accurate decisions on education claims and continue payments at appropriate levels to enhance veterans' and servicemembers' ability to achieve educational and career goals.*

### Performance Goal

*Process original and supplemental education claims in 29 and 15 days, respectively.*



We surpassed our goals for 2003 by achieving 23 days to process original education claims and 12 days to process supplemental education claims. We continued improvements to the Electronic Certification Automated Processing (ECAP) system, increasing the number of cases processed electronically. Approximately 6 percent of all incoming work is processed through ECAP. This is double the amount processed in 2002.

We continued to dedicate case managers for claims processing through the use of seasonal employees and education liaison representatives for other duties as necessary. Seasonal employees proved to be most beneficial during peak workload periods (August-October and January-February). We also made judicious use of overtime to reduce pending workload. Since the education business line receives the majority of its

work during the spring and fall enrollment periods, we schedule overtime during these time periods to keep the pending workload under control.

A VBA team conducts on-site visits at each regional processing office (RPO) to monitor compliance and operational performance. In addition, ongoing quality assurance reviews are conducted for each RPO. VBA created an Intranet site with job aids to assist employees in processing claims and to allow sharing of best practices among the RPOs.

Legislation enacted in early 2002 contained provisions such as the acceleration of payment for high-technology courses and tuition assistance top-up (TOP-UP). Accelerated payment claims will be processed with a more time-consuming "out-of-system" approach for the foreseeable future until systems can be modified

to accommodate these claims. TOP-UP claims will be processed in the system but will also require additional procedural steps. Since these types of claims require additional time to process, close monitoring will be necessary in 2004 to ensure that accomplishment of our performance goals is sustained.

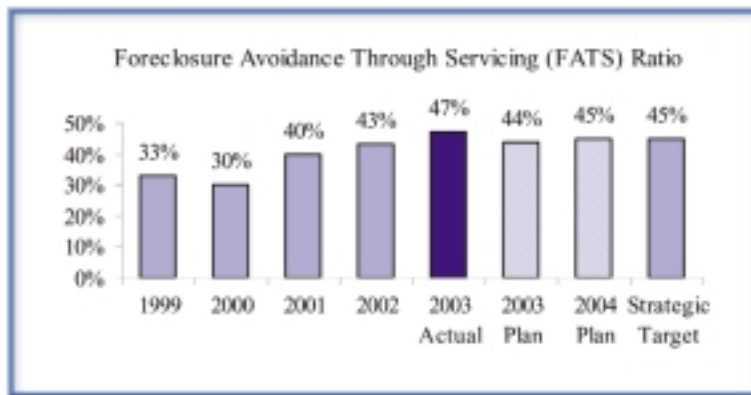
Overall processing timeliness is affected by the quality of the enrollment information and certification received from school officials. To improve overall processing time, VA developed an electronic education certification program (VACERT) that allows schools to send enrollment certifications to VA regional processing offices electronically. At this time, over half of all schools use VACERT. An Internet application, eCERT, will replace VACERT, making the application more attractive to schools. This system was deployed on a limited basis in 2003 and will be expanded in 2004. In addition, we continued to offer "new certifying official" training in 2003 and will continue in 2004. Certifying officials are employed by educational institutions to serve the veteran/student and submit enrollment information to VA for use in paying benefits. The more knowledge they possess, the more they are able to assist VA in serving veterans' needs.

## Objective 2.3

*Improve the ability of veterans to purchase and retain a home by meeting or exceeding lending industry standards for quality, timeliness, and foreclosure avoidance.*

### Performance Goal

*Improve the foreclosure avoidance through servicing (FATS) ratio to 44 percent.*



We surpassed our goal of 44 percent to improve the foreclosure avoidance through servicing ratio by achieving 47 percent in 2003.

VA began performing a complete review and redesign of the loan servicing function in 2003, which will continue in 2004. VA plans to move closer to performance and operational standards used by large private sector loan service providers and lenders. Among the standards being considered to prevent foreclosures and improve the FATS ratio will be an emphasis on the use of financial incentives as well as affording greater flexibility to primary loan service providers of VA-guaranteed loans.

Delinquent loan servicing has contributed to improvements to the FATS ratio over the last three fiscal years, and its importance will continue to be emphasized at the management and operational levels. Economic

factors such as interest rates, real estate appreciation, and employment levels impact on the ability of veterans to purchase a home and avoid foreclosure in the event of default. Achievement of this performance goal is not directly dependent on other agencies. VBA has close interaction with the real estate industry.